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Foreword

I.A. Barsky

The emphasis in present penal philosophy is placed on inmate treatment and training. Parallel with this approach is the greater role given to individual treatment and, as such, to cultural activities. The purpose is twofold: (1) the needs of inmates are met by varying the nature of the training programme; (2) the void within the inmate, created by his removal from society, is filled by his involvement in cultural activities.

ADVANCE is an attempt to do both. It is hoped that by attending classes in creative writing, the inmate will gain a newer perspective of himself as an individual; equally, by writing a story or poem, he will use his leisure time in a creative or constructive manner.

Last summer, we were fortunate in having on our staff Mr. Richard Manz, an interim replacement teacher from the University of Ottawa. Mr. Manz' interest in writing and his ability to convey this interest to others were instrumental in starting a class in Creative Writing. At first, we had no intention of publishing any stories that resulted from this class. Indeed, for most of the students it marked the first time that they had attempted writing of any sort. However, as they became more and more involved in their class, their works took on a higher quality. It was then decided that a selection of the best prose would be made with a view to publishing them.

ADVANCE is the first magazine of its kind to come out of a Canadian Penitentiary. It clearly manifests the new attitudes in Canadian penology. Much of its success is due to the progressive new warden of Joyceville Institution, Warden A.J. Jarvis, who actively supported me on this project.

I am also indebted to Deputy Warden J.M. Meers who suggested that prizes be given for the best stories.

Special acknowledgements go to inmate Bill Martin for editing the magazine, illustrating the cover in lino block, and suggesting the name ADVANCE.

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ONE OF THESE DAYS, POW!

by Bill Lytwyn

With his head tilted back and his eyes closed to the bright warmth of the sun, the young man dozed lightly as his frail canoe drifted slowly downriver. He held a fishing rod in his hand limply, scarcely aware of its heft. Man, he thought, this is the life. No noise, just peace and quiet. That old lady of mine is enough to drive a man to drink, always bitching about something or other. And those kids are just as bad, always yelling and screaming. Take after the old lady, I guess. Damn it, if I had it to do all over again, I'd sure tell her where to get off. Never get married, life's too damn short to spend it on nine-to-five slave labour, mowing the lawn, taking out the garbage, and that incessant you-never-take-me-out-anywhere-anymore whine. So help me, thought the young man, one of these days pow! right in the kisser.

Suddenly the man became aware of an ever-increasing noise around him and he opened his eyes; then he jerked upright, the fishing rod falling over the side of the canoe unheeded. He looked around wildly, the colour draining from his face as he noticed the high walls and the swirling waters into which the canoe was rapidly being drawn.

"My god, the Throat!" he exclaimed aloud. He scrambled frantically for the paddle, the canoe rocking precariously. It seemed like an eternity before he could pry the paddle out from under the gear strewn about his feet. As he straightened up with the paddle in his hands, the canoe lurched sideways and then shot into the swift current of the rapids. Too late, he thought grimly, I'll just have to ride this out.

The scene resembled a gigantic boiling cauldron. Swift moving water cascaded with a deafening roar through the high-walled chasm and dashed against the huge boulders in its path sending froths of spray high into the air to fall back on the man in the boat.

The canoe rode the swirling waters, twisting and turning, disappearing momentarily beneath the mist and spray. Time and again the frail craft narrowly

missed being torn to pieces on the jagged rocks as the young man fought with all his strength to guide the canoe through the raging troughs of water. Right and left, then left again; with arms aching from the strain, paddle bending beneath the pressure, the man fought furiously to keep afloat. And then directly in front of him a massive boulder loomed menacingly, and the man leaned hard on the paddle. The strain was too much and with a sharp snap the paddle broke in two. The craft plunged into the boulder and the young man was catapulted into the river.

The rushing current tumbled him this way and that, tossing him against the boulders and shoving him under icy waters. He fought desperately, clutching at the rocks with bleeding fingers only to have the current tear him away. A searing pain in his side fought his need to breathe and a darkness threatened to engulf his mind.

Got to make it, he gasped. Got to make it. A jagged rock pierced his thigh clear to the bone but he fought against the agonizing pain, the nausea welling up within, and struggled to keep his head above the slashing water.

As quickly as the Throat had sucked him in its frightful maw, it now spewed him out. The noise of rushing waters abated and the current slackened and the young man struggled feebly to shore. His eyes glazed with fatigue and the pain of his battered body, the man stared with dull fixity at the nearing shore as he weakly moved his arms in a grotesque parody of swimming. Finally, he reached out and painfully drew himself onto the dry surface of a large slab of rock on the river bank. Completely exhausted, he lay there for long minutes gasping for air, the rock beneath him turning red from the from the bright crimson of his blood.

He lifted his head slowly and tried to push himself erect but the searing pain in his side made him fold up on his arms. Damn it, he thought, must have broken a couple of ribs. And then becoming aware of the warm stickiness of his thigh, he pushed himself to a sitting position and drew back the tattered remnants of his pantleg. Christ! it was cut to the bone! I've got to get help fast.

With a long strip of the torn pantleg, he bound the gashed thigh muscle and tied it firmly; then he rose slowly and stood tottering for a moment trying to get his bearings. He looked back to the tumbling rapids through which he had come, and then to the sun low in the western sky. Clutching his side fiercely, he set off through the bush.

The underbrush was thick in this low-lying area, and moss grew freely on the fallen and rotting tree trunks affording a slippery foothold for this stumbling feet. Time and again he plummeted to the ground and each time it took longer to rise.

"Got to rest", he mumbled, "jus' for a minute."

He looked around. An intermingling of blood and sweat trickled down his forehead and into his eyes causing his vision to waver. Off to one side was a clump of tall brown grass and he made his way to it. Must rest, he thought, just

for a minute. The grass formed a comfortable mat under him as he crumpled to the ground and slipped into unconsciousness immediately.

The young man couldn't remember getting up or how long he had been on the trail. He didn't know whether it was day or night or how long he slept. All that pressed into his mind was that he had to get home. The wife and the kids will be worried sick, he thought. The pain of his battered body had given way to comfortable numbness and the going was easier now. But replacing the physical pain was mental anguish, the anxiety and fear of not seeing his wife and children again.

The ground seemed to be flying by now and he felt light as a breeze. Direction was no problem, instinct seemed to have taken over and was leading him. Landmarks were becoming familiar and then he was out of the bush and into a clearing from where he could see his cottage only a stone's throw away. He tried to hurry now but something seemed to be holding him back as if he was trying to work his way out of treacherous quicksand.

He could see his wife clearly, standing on the verandah with a broom in hand calling softly to the children who were playing in the front yard. A lump rose in his throat and his eyes grew misty as he watched her freshly scrubbed face and hair gleaming in the rays of the late afternoon sun. God, she's beautiful, he thought.

The young man tried to move forward but he still could not move. "Marie," he cried, calling to his wife, "help me". But she continued to sweep the porch and took no notice of him. Then he dropped to his knees and started crawling toward the house. "Marie," he called again, "it's me. Help me." His wife lifted her head and looked over in his direction. She dropped the broom and ran over to him with a startled look on her face. A moment later she was cradling his head in her lap and stroking his brow. Her fingers felt cool and soothing and the young man let his muscles slacken in luxurious relief. "Home at last," he sighed; then he looked at his wife's pretty face and he smiled.

The two dogs set the woods alive with their excited barking. "Over here," called a man, "I think they've found something." A group of men quickly gathered around the dogs and stared at the clump of tall brown grass cradling the lifeless figure of the young man.

"Must have crawled in there to rest and just bled to death," one of the searchers remarked to no one in particular. "Too bad; he was a nice guy. Well, let's get the body out of here and inform his wife."

"You know," one of the younger men commented, "for a guy who's been through what he has, he sure looks content — like he was at home in bed."

"Yeah," the first man replied. "He's even smiling." He looked around the group of men and urged, "Well, let's get going. I've got to get home or my old lady'll start her bitching about where I've been all this time. Boy I'm telling you, one of these days, pow! right in her kisser."

WINK-OFF HARRY

by Sid Stern

Wink-Off Harry had a domestic problem. His son was selfish. Since W.O. was a poker hustler, it followed that as an avocation, he was a student of the foibles and whims of man. He'd had a profitable evening the night before by correctly deducing the value of his opponent's cards, and consequently was in a quite amiable mood.

"Harry!" called his soul mate in her raucous, rasping voice. "When you going to teach Cecil that everything in the world wasn't made for him to eat?"

Wink-Off glanced over at his son watching T.V. Cecil casually stuffed another handful of cherries into his mouth while the last batch was only halfway down his throat — pits and all

That's funny, mused Wink-Off, I didn't know cherry pits were to eat. I thought they were to grow cherry trees with. I'd better straighten this kid out or he'll grow up to be an orchard

"Cecil, I want to talk to you," he started.

"I'm watching T.V.," was the whining reply.

"C'mere!"

"What d' you want?" Cecil grunted as he rolled up off the floor.

"I'm going to tell you a story," replied Wink-Off.

"Aw, I'm too old for stories."

"You might be too fat, but not too old. Now! Put that barrel of cherries away and sit beside me. And don't just sit I want you to listen, too."

Wink-Off recalled a quotation he had once read in the Bible. I'll tell him about that story, he mused, and maybe he'll get the idea it pays not to be selfish.

"Cecil," he began, "it's better to give than to receive."

Cecil eyed his barrel of cherries guardedly. Well, he thought, there go my cherries. "Why's it better?" he asked sullenly.

"Because it says so in the Bible," retorted Wink-Off.

"But if I give it away, how can I eat it?" logically replied the ten-year old.

Wink-Off had forgotten the details of the story as written in the Bible. I don't even remember who said it, he ruminated. Was it Noah, or Samson? Well, I think I'd better tell him one that I do know.

"All right, now listen to this," he said. "Once upon a time there were three wise men from the East." Wink-Off hesitated as he tried to remember some Biblical names, but all he could think of was Cleopatra and Salome.

"There names were-uh-Joe, and Slow, and-uh-Moe."

Slightly awed at this display of his father's imagination, Cecil was paying rapt attention.

"Now, each one of these men owned a magic property," continued Wink-Off. "Joe owned a magic mirror that was like T.V. When he looked in it he could see and hear anybody in the world, no matter where they were. Understand?"

With a pensive expression Cecil nodded his head. He'd just been watching a re-run of "The Chorus Line" on T.V.

"The other fellow, Slow, had a magic carpet, on which he could travel anywhere in the world faster than the fastest aeroplane or jet. It was a big carpet so he could even go four or five-handed if he wanted to take passengers. Know what I mean, Cecil?"

Now captured, Cecil nodded again.

"Moe, the third wise man from the East, owned a magic apple. Now, get this, Cecil. Anybody who took a bite of this apple, even if he had a heart attack, or even frostbite, or anything would be cured immediately!"

Cecil, thinking of the violent belly-aches he sometimes suffered from, was wishfully hoping, Boy, if I had a barrel of those apples, I could just eat, and get better all the time. He sensed something wrong with the analogy, but he let it pass.

"One day," continued W.O., "Joe and Slow and Moe were sitting around cutting up about last night's poker game and people they used to know.

"Slightly bored, Joe said, 'What can we do for some action?'

" 'Why don't we look into your mirror,' said Moe, 'and see what's happening at the Sultan's harem. Just for kicks, like.'

"So they looked into the mirror, and saw the Sultan surrounded by all his wives. And there were five doctors and everybody was crying because the Sultan was dying and the doctors couldn't help him.

" 'Let's ride over on my magic carpet,' said Slow, 'and see what's doing.'

"The three wise men from the East jumped on the carpet and at once were beside the Sultan's bed.

" 'What's happening?' asked Moe.

"The newest wife, who with tender emotion was lovingly referred to by the Sultan as Peanut Buterball, sobbed. 'Our beloved husband, Sultan Hashish, is dying. He is beyond the help of mortal hands.' She then broke out into paroxysms of shivering and shaking and uncontrolled shrieks of lamentation."

Say thought W.O. to himself, maybe it was Salome who wrote that proverb. Naw, I guess not.

"Anyway, Moe, feeling sorry for the Sultan, unselfishly offered, 'Here you are, Hash, old boy, have an apple.' The Sultan took a bite, chewed slowly and then swallowed. He opened his eyes, looked around, spotted his newest wife and said, 'Are you sleepy, little Peanut Butterball?' "

"Harry!" hollered his wife. "He's only ten years old!"

"All right," said W.O. "Anyway, you dig, Cecil? The Sultan was all better.

"And so the Sultan called the three wise men of the East together and spoke: 'Mister Joe, this barrel of gold is for you, because without your magic mirror, none of you would have known I was sick and dying. And, Mr. Slow, this barrel of gold is for you because without your magic carpet none of you could have gotten here in time to save me.'

"And, turning to Moe, the Sultan continued, 'Mr. Moe, for you a barrel of diamonds, for without your magic apple I could not have been saved. Do you know why you received diamonds while the others only gold, Mr. Moe?'

" 'Of course,' said Moe, 'I ain't got no more apples.'

"Do you understand, Cecil?" asked Wink-Off. "Now do you know what I mean when I say it's better to give than to receive?"

"Ya, I get it Pop. When I grow up, I ain't gonna push hack or be a furniture salesman — I'm gonna become a fruit peddler!"

THE MISTAKE

by Alf Gillies

Jim Harris arrived in Las Vegas on the last day of October. No one met him and he declined the solicitations of the taxi drivers outside the bus depot. Instead, as always, he walked out onto the street and into the throng that flowed along the gambling center's bright main street. A few blocks from the depot, he turned into the courtyard of the small motel where he would stay for this one night in Vegas. He didn't have a reservation but, this being the fourth year in a row he had made his one-night stay there, he knew he didn't need one. And, most important, the old man who ran the place never remembered him from one year to the next.

He checked in and, after a brief rest, opened his simple overnight bag and laid out the toiletries for a bath and a shave. He finished off his hot shower with cold needle spray, towelled himself briskly and leisurely donned his clothes.

Despite the excitement surging within him, he strolled casually along the strip to the restaurant he always frequented on these trips. This was the one hour of pleasure he allowed himself and, as always, he briefly toyed with the idea that it could be his last pleasureable hour.

He chose a table near the window and gazed out at the blazing neon signs, his mind busy with the purpose which brought him here. A waitress came up to his table and took his order, and as she walked away he made a conscious effort to concentrate on the patrons of the restaurant.

He finished his meal and walked back to his motel where he exchanged a few words with the old man and borrowed an alarm clock from him. Once inside his room, he locked the door and placed his overnight bag on the bed. From it he took a rubber mask and a snub nose .45 and put them on the dresser; then he set the alarm clock for 3:00 a.m. and went to bed.

He woke up the instant the alarm began to ring. In only minutes he was dressed and once again walking the strip. At the bus depot he rented a dime locker for his bag and bought a ticket and questioned the clerk as to the exact time the bus would leave. Satisfied with the answer, he turned and left the depot, moving carefully so that the gun in his waist band and the mask in his inside coat pocket would not mar the smooth lines of his clothes.

Fifteen minutes walking brought him to the Royal Flush Casino where he entered and paused in the lobby carefully scrutinizing the scene before him. The club was filled to capacity and thousands of dollars were flowing over the gaming tables. Harris smiled briefly at the sight.

To his left about twenty feet distant from where he stood, a door marked "Private" opened and a man carrying a metal cash box came out of the office behind him and went to one of the tables where he exchanged the box he was carrying for another from the table boss. Then he started back to the private office.

When the man was but a few feet from the office door, Harris casually slipped up behind him and with one swift motion affixed the mask to his face and drew his gun and held it close to his body so as to screen it from the crowd in the casino. As the man opened the door to the office, Harris pushed him violently from behind, slipped through the door after the hurtling figure and quickly shut the door. He stood unmoving for a minute his gun held in front of him and menacing the occupants of the office.

A large desk stood at one end of the office and the man sitting behind it stared unbelievably. Standing beside the desk a man in guard's uniform held his arm bent stiffly in front of him as the newspaper he had been reading floated to the floor.

"Not one sound, and everyone on the floor," Harris ordered evenly.

As they moved to comply, Harris relieved the guard of his gun; then he took from his inside coat pocket a large manila envelope, unfolded it and carefully stacked the bills from the cash box into the envelope. With his hand on the office door, he paused and, turning to the men lying prone, said, "I'll have to stall for about a minute outside this door to make things look casual, so don't be in a hurry to rush out. You'll only get a bullet in the guts."

Before opening the door, Harris switched off the lights and took off his mask; then he slipped out through the partly open door and closed it quickly behind him.

He walked directly but apparently without haste to the entrance of the casino; but once on the street, he strode briskly along the thoroughfare. Scant minutes later he entered the bus depot and went straight to the row of lockers and retrieved his overnight bag. Using the locker door and his body as a shield, he took the gun from his waist band and the mask from his pocket and placed them in the back of the locker, closed and re-locked the door.

As the bus was leaving the outskirts of Las Vegas, Harris settled more comfortably in his seat and allowed himself to relax. Perfect, he thought, just like the other times. He had to admit, though, that he had been more keyed up this time — something about going to the well too often.

Suddenly, the bus slowed down sharply, and Harris opened his eyes and peered over the heads of the passengers in front of him. The starlit night and the glare of the headlights revealed the scene clearly: it was a police roadblock. There

were two cars ahead of the bus and he desperately tried to think in the few minutes it took the police to complete their interrogation of the cars' passengers. But, before he could formulate any plan, the bus had drawn up to the check-point and two state troopers came aboard. One of the troopers stopped up front to speak to the driver while the other began to move slowly down the aisle.

Harris surreptitiously drew a small stiletto from his inner pocket, palmed it and waited, outwardly calm but inwardly tensed. As the trooper leaned toward him, Harris drove the blade into his chest, and the trooper fell. Harris slammed the emergency door handle, pushed open the door and leaped to the pavement. He ran back up the highway dodging between the cars lined up behind the bus.

"Stop!" someone behind him shouted. "Stop, or I'll shoot!"

But Harris only increased his pace. Gasping for breath, his heart pounding, he never heard the shots. A sharp burning sensation in the calf of his leg forced him to stumble and fall forward. Just before he hit the pavement, the second bullet hit him in the back. His breath left him and he clawed the asphalt breaking his fingernails.

Someone touched him and rolled him over on his back. He looked up but could not pierce the mist forming in front of his eyes. A great something welled up in his throat, his head jerked up convulsively and a stream of scarlet issued from his mouth. Then his head sank back to the pavement and turned to one side.

"He's gone," said a trooper.

Two city detectives looked at the corpse at their feet. One of them turned to the other and said, "Now that this has happened, I guess we'll have to forget our detail for that county jail escapee."

ALL THAT GLITTERS

by Ted Spilchen

"This will be the most exciting day of my life," thought Thomas J. Tuttle as he skipped off the bus at Hollywood's Greyhound Terminal and made his way to the men's room to freshen up and wet down his cow-lick; and maybe change his shirt if the collar was crumpled or dirty. It had been a long trip from Blueberry Junction — two days and a night in fact, and he had not changed in all that time.

Thomas J. Tuttle was the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary of the "Lindsay Glamour Fan Club" of which he was quite proud (even though he was the only member). He was regarded by the residents of Blueberry Junction as the droll member of a group of ten that had comprised the membership when the club was formed. He had a fanciful sense of humor, a slow drawling way of talking and a habit of interspersing parenthetical chuckles throughout his conversation; and the odd "Yep, you bet", that sometimes startled his listeners by the very unexpectedness of it. His greatest disappointment lay in the dispersal of the members of the Lindsay Glamour Fan-Club in favour of new-found idols. He alone would carry her golden fame into the future. Yep, you bet, he had told himself, taking great pride in his unswerving loyalty. As President he had authorized for himself the trip as his reward for his faithful adherence to the club's cardinal rule of not missing a single Lindsay Glamour movie, a resolution he had made when the club was formed.

All spruced up now, sporting a "spit-polish" shine for which he paid with all the flourish of a Dumas cavalier, and clutching a fistfull of tourist brochures on the "Film Capital" of the world, Thomas left the station and made his way to that Mecca of tourists, the corner of Hollywood and Vine. There he would find himself "rubbing shoulders with all kinds of movie stars and producers and maybe even get myself discovered. Most of all, he had told himself, "I might bump right smack into *L I N D S Y G L A M O U R*."

One could only imagine the tumult of anticipation stirring in Thomas' chest as he approached the corner of Hollywood and Vine. But fancy his disappointment, after spending the whole morning without once catching the glimpse of a single star or even a "bit-player", to find that Hollywood and Vine was just like any other metropolitan focal point; packed with busy shoppers, parking meters and traffic-cops. Nor were there any stars to be seen at the famous Grauman's Chinese Theatre, near where he came close to having his face slapped for following a young lady several blocks and finally, in a state

of almost ecstatic expectation, leaping in front of her in an effort to peek under her large dark glasses. He had sought to confirm his suspicions (suggested by the dark glasses and fortified by a unique process of thought association) that she was an actress strolling incognito.

Toward evening, one might have noticed that the halo of rapture which had accompanied Thomas as he made his way from the station that morning had changed to a cloud of despair. He had followed the itinerary of the most promising brochures; visiting 20th Century Productions, Hollywood's largest movie studio (only to discover it closed); stopping in at famous restaurants ("Where the Stars Dine", the brochures had *misinformed* him); and, then, taking a Beverly Hills sightseeing tour bus (without once seeing a star "practicing short putts" on the front lawn). His disappointment was ineffable. It had been a totally disheartening day; he had failed to fulfil a single expectation. "Sure could stand a snort now," he had told himself, "Yep, you bet".

And so, sometime later, Thomas J. Tuttle could be seen perched upon a bar stool, staring dejectedly into his double bourbon, as if it were a crystal ball in which could be found an infallible set of instructions that would lead him to "stars galore".

Sitting there, he had become absorbed in his disappointment that he took no notice of the tall, shapely woman with the angelic features of Rahpael's Madonna, who had entered the lounge, pausing a moment inside the doorway as if accustoming her eyes to the dimness of the room. Nor did he notice as she made her way unsteadily, trailing a long, expensive looking fur-piece behind her, toward the empty stool beside him. Not till she seated herself in a reckless, sprawling defiance of propriety, swinging her stole up from the floor so that it took a wide arch brushing the pad of Thomas' cheek before settling in her lap, did he become aware of her.

At once there was a lump in his throat. His breath accelerated. His heart seemed to knock against his rib cage as though there were someone inside him trying to burst out. Sudden excitement gripped him with spasmodic fingers ecstatic, delectable, exquisite, galvanic, hilarious excitement, hitherto unfelt emotion in Thomas J. Tuttle's world. In an effort to compose himself, he reached for his drink. The liquid spilled out of his shaking grasp onto the bar. "Lindsay Glamour". He was beside himself with excitement. Who would have thought to find him sitting next to the most glamorous movie star in the whole world. "Wait till the folks back home hear of this".

A flurry of thoughts raced through his mind. He would introduce himself. She would be delighted to meet him, the President of Blueberry Junction's Lindsay Glamour Fan-club. He would tell her how faithful he had been in not missing a single one of her pictures. How he adored her (heh,heh). She would hardly refuse to share part of this evening with him once she learned "who he was". His excitement changed to bliss. He turned to call the waiter; he would order her cocktail and then reveal himself to her. No. He would introduce himself first. Immediately. "Miss Glamour...Miss Glam...I am...", the words tumbled out of his mouth in a torrent of confusion. "President Lindsay ...

Tuttle Junction...heh, heh..." His cheeks reddened as he thought of how silly he must sound. He was facing her now; but she had her back turned to him, preoccupied, it seemed, in rummaging through her purse, as if she were looking for a lipstick. A sigh of relief escaped his lips. She had not heard a thing he said. He would wait a few minutes, marshal his thoughts, subdue the terrible churning inside him and then approach her with the kind of dignity the occasion called for.

"Waiter," it was her voice Thomas heard. "Hey, Waiter, how about some service. Got no service in this dump?"

"Don't know why I ever came into this crummy place," she said disparagingly, as the waiter returned with her order, placing it on a paper coaster and sliding a basket of pretzels along side of it. Across the room, someone got up to drop a coin in the Wurlitzer. Soon the room was throbbing with the surrealistic rhythm of avant-garde jazz.

Suddenly, to Thomas' distress Lindsay Glamour was quarreling with the waiter. There it was again, that strangeness. It was her voice, he thought. That rich contralto voice that was hers in all her pictures, that had always thrilled and left him breathless with its husky softness as he followed it from screen to screen, that was normally so refined and well-bred, was now coarse and raucous and, somehow, not hers. But she is Lindsay, he told himself, yet acting very *un-Lindsay* like.

Perhaps the waiter had offended her? he thought. He had not heard the early exchange between them too clearly. He had been preoccupied with defining that strangeness and too caught up in his excitement to absorb everything that had been said. His thoughts raced on. That was it. She had been offended. This he had come to know with certainty. And now she was being provoked with argument, causing her to respond in a manner beneath the majesty of her person. Evidently, the waiter does not know who Lindsay Glamour is. He would demand an apology on her behalf.

The thought struck his fancy. He pictured himself as a knight astride a great white stallion, lance ready, prepared to defend, if necessary with his life, the dignity of a lady who had been outraged at the hands of a rogue; Theseus prepared to do battle with the Minotaur for the love of Ariadne, Princess of Crete. What finer credentials could he proffer? How better to ingratiate himself to her than to appear as her rescuer?

As though an electric current had passed through his body, the nobleness of his mission jerked Thomas to his feet. "Miss Glamour," he blurted out, "I will defend you against this scoundrel," taking on the air, now, of a knight-at-arms, completely under the influence of the role in which he had cast himself.

The suddenness and intenseness of his voice drew her eyes toward him. The waiter sprang back from the bar as if startled by an unexpected thunder-clap and eyed Thomas curiously. Thomas opened his mouth, about to speak, paused a moment to square his shoulders and swell his chest, looking for all the world like a game-cock courting a young hen. "Miss Glamour...Lindsay...I...will..."

Her words cut into his heart like a barbed stilleto. "Get away from me mister. Waiter. What kind of a place ya running here? Throw this slob outa here." He felt himself grow cold, as though someone had slipped an ice cube down his collar. A vituperative collection of syllables mixed with rye and saliva leaked out of her mouth as she berated him for daring to address a "lady" in public — he a total stranger.

The scene became poignant for Thomas J. Tuttle. He stood silent, mouth agape. It was not at all the outcome he had expected. The hot flush of embarrassment crept into his cheeks as he thought of the spectacle he must have made of himself, carried away as he had been by his good intentions. How horrible. He gave a strangled sob and lowered his eyes.

Then, her voice broke into laughter. Laughing at him, he thought, what a fool he must seem to her. Completely mortified, he would have left had he not been so paralyzed with grief.

But what followed next simply dumbfounded poor Thomas J. Tuttle. As he raised his eyes for that last look at the only women in his life, he saw that she had slid passionately off her stool and made her way to the center of the room where she began an impromptu "Strip Tease" that ossified Thomas on the spot.

The shock of seeing her disrobe before his very eyes, hips rotating in a scandalous response to the music still seeping from the Wurlitzer, had somehow caused the thread of reality to unravel for him. In all movies, she had always been a study of propriety, or modesty. What had happened to the beautiful, exclusive, Lindsay Glamour; to his paragon of sophistication and "just plain class", who now looked so cheap and shockingly dissolute as her performance grew more frenetic with the increased tempo of the music. His thought surged on, propelling him to the brink of vertigo, on...on...on...It was as if the bar were a location for a rehearsal of a movie about Mad Magazine, he thought.

Rehearsal, rehearsal, the word echoed and reverberated throughout his mental chamber, stirring up the grey-matter. Explaining and, suddenly, giving direction to his thoughts. His eyes took on a new luster. The dizziness stopped. Of course, he thought; that was it. Lindsay Glamour was rehearsing a part for a new type of movie—what else? The argument at the bar, her words to him. It was all part of the rehearsal, all acting.

The idea sped through the labyrinth of his mind, gaining momentum, crystallizing so that it became for him the only possible explanation of what he was witnessing. By a process of *auto-suggestion*, the mechanism of all self delusion, Thomas was able to correlate the evening's events, his thought to the actual reality of Lindsay Glamour's unusual behaviour and, thus, rearrange that reality to match the situation in his mind. A smile of satisfaction creased his lips as he settled back onto his stool, delighted with his discovery.

Everyone in the bar was part of the picture, he thought, and, probably, took him for another extra. He was thrilled at this new notion. In fact, he might even sneak into the picture if he went unnoticed during the editing. After all, who notices extras. He would return to Blueberry Junction a hero.

In the midst of conjuring up images of himself as Lindsay's new leading man, his mind a montage of romantic embraces that left her swooning, Thomas' attention was directed to the waiter who in a sudden flurry of motion was descending upon Lindsay with a malevolence in his eyes that could not have been written into any script, for the sheer hostility of it would be beyond the reach of the most skillful of actors. Grabbing her arm with a force that all but swept her off her feet, and scooping up the scattered apparel that once graced her flawless anatomy, the waiter pushed and pulled his way to the exit through which he unceremoniously shoved her, flinging her garments after her.

Bravo. A REAListic finale, thought Thomas, picturing the scene in his mind, with the director's attention to detail. It was then, for the first time, that the room became conspicuous for him by the utter absence of cameras, lighting and other photographic equipment. Nausea spread slowly through him as his awareness took on dimension.

Hurriedly, he dug into his pocket, pulling out several bills and throwing them onto the bar, not waiting for his change (inconsistent with Thomas' normal frugality, but understandable under such conditions), panicking toward the exit to substantiate his fears that all this had not been a rehearsal after all, as he had come to believe. Oh God, he thought, as the tableau of Lindsay sprawled out on the sidewalk with less adornment than Adam's Eve to shield her from the passing stares of pedestrians and motorists, entered his mind.

As he had reached the street, he saw that she was already the center of the crowd. Lechers, he told himself. What humiliation, he thought, picturing her desperately struggling into her clothing under the lascivious eyes of so many males. What could he do?

Drawing closer to the edge of the crowd, Thomas was to receive still one final shock before he was to bow his head and drag his feet away from the center of his shattered world. There stood Lindsay Glamour in the center of all those strangers Lady Godiva without her horse, orating on the advantages of membership in nudist colonies in a neurotic society. He did not linger for the arrival of the police-wagon; that was one sight he had resolved to spare himself.

Sometime later, with several hours to fill before his bus was due to carry him back to Blueberry Junction, Thomas J. Tuttle could be seen studying the flickering marquee of Hollywood's Biltmore Theatre "Lindsay Glamour" in "Night of Love". Ecstasy toyed with his lips as he reached into his pocket for the price of admission, purchased his ticket, and made his way toward the entrance. The day with its stifled tears, acute disappointments, and harsh incongruities, had been more than he could accept. It had been easy for Thomas to make, once more, that cerebral mal-alignment that made all things right again.

The incongruities had vanished; the tears, once dolorous, became joyous; the self performed, instrumentless lobotomy was complete. And as he sat poised at the very edge of his seat, devouring the *irreproachable* image of his idol eagerly anticipating each new scene, oblivious to all else, like a child over each new toy on Christmas Morn', one might envy the expression of bliss on his face exposing the contentment within...

NICELY

LEGAL

by Sid Stern

I

His eyes seemed to keep time with the pendulum of the large grandfather clock, but at an accelerated pace. He was an easterner as born out by his clothing and his speech.

"Sheriff, my name is Haley Vent, and I'll be staying in your town for approximately a week. We may have occasion for some further discussion in the near future, so I thought I would introduce myself now in anticipation of our coming meeting. You see, Sheriff, our second meeting will probably not be this uneventful."

For a brief moment his eyes steadied as he looked directly at Sheriff Clary. "What's your business, Mr. Vent?"

"Perhaps if you walked over to the bank to see the manager, he'd present you with a complete picture of my business. Now you, Sheriff, can oblige me if you will, by displaying these posters throughout your little town."

Reaching into the inside pocket of his frocked coat with his left hand, he pulled out a sheaf of papers, neatly wrapped and tied with string, and dropped them on the sheriff's desk.

"Good Day, Sheriff."

The sheriff grunted in noncommittal reply as he watched Vent glide to the door, his right arm stiffly at his side. He hadn't missed the Frontier model 45 strapped underneath the frock coat to his right hip, with the butt facing inward.

Clary mused silently, "Haven't seen a left-handed cross draw for some time. Hope this fella doesn't have to use it."

II

Harold Reason speculatively fingered the six one-thousand dollar bills that had been casually tossed onto his desk by his recent visitor. "My name is Vent," explained the stranger. "This envelope contains six one-thousand dollar bills. Five of them are a reward, the other is remuneration for you to see the five thousand dollars goes to the proper party. If no one comes to claim the money by noon Saturday, you will then return the six thousand dollars to me."

"I'd like a little information—" the manager began.

"Mr. Reason," Vent cut in, "we are both men of responsibility. I am giving you an opportunity to earn a thousand dollars in one week without the risk of any investment on your part. Do you want it or not?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Vent. But what would you have me do?"

"The sheriff will be over to see you in a little while. He has the explanation. Good day, Mr. Reason."

III

The sheriff stuffed the parcel he held into his pocket as he walked toward the bank.

"Mornin', Harold. Looks like I got here in time to stop a robbery."

The bank manager's eyebrows climbed to meet his hairline.

"Who? Where?"

Clay smiled and nodded toward the money lying loosely on the desk.

"Oh, I was just going to call on you," smiled the manager weakly. "I just had a visitor, and he told me you'd know what's to be done with this money."

"Me? How'd I know? He told me to go see you about this."

Clary took the package out of his pocket and untied the string. The package rolled open and looking directly up at them was a vivid likeness of the stranger Vent.

Clary phlegmatically chewed his wad of tobacco, and Reason shifted uncomfortably in his chair as they read: \$5,000 Reward for the body of the above when delivered to the banker or sheriff of this town. Directly beneath the picture was printed the name: PETER VENT.

"That's him, that's him. He must be crazy. He —"

"Now, take it easy, Harold. That ain't Vent. Leastwise, not the Vent that was in to see me. The name on this here poster is Peter, and his name was Haley. Now, what's he trying to do?"

"I don't like it, Sheriff. Anyone can mistake this picture for him. And \$5,000. They're not going to wait to find out if his first name is Peter before they try to collect it."

IV

"Just put the money away, Harold. I'll see ya later."

The sheriff walked into the bar, and on sighting the eastern garb, said, "Mr. Vent?"

The stranger whirled awkwardly drawing his gun with his left hand at the same time.

"Pretty slow, ain't you, Mr. Vent? Why are ya paying \$5,000 to commit suicide?"

Vent smiled enigmatically and answered, "I'm Haley, Sheriff, not Peter."

"Me and you know it, Mr. Vent. But some half-drunk cowpuncher ain't gonna know it; neither is any bounty hunter."

"Look, Sheriff, I've hunted elephant in Africa, tiger in India, and the Kodiak bear in northern Canada. Don't you worry about me. Death is my constant companion. You and the others fight him by retreat and evasion. I fight him by frontal assault. He knows me by now. He retreats. He evades. Just put up those posters, Sheriff. Death is still evading me, but he may pick up someone else on his path of retreat."

"What are ya tryin' to do, Mr. Vent?"

"Excitement, Sheriff, just a little excitement."

"You're Peter, aren't you? or Haley. Right?"

The stranger turned away abruptly with right arm stiffened at his side. "Just put up the posters, Sheriff."

"Hold it, Vent. I ain't gonna have some peaceful citizen get killed by you for chasing \$5,000."

"If the citizen is peaceful, Sheriff, he won't go chasing it. If he's not greedy, he won't either. It will be the bullies and troublemakers that try to get the \$5,000, Sheriff, and your town is better off without them. I'm leaving now, unless you want to be first to try for the reward."

Vent turned towards the door, and while doing so scattered about twenty reward posters on the floor. He disdainfully tossed a handful of silver dollars atop the leaflets. The hangers-on bent quickly for the money and a few of them picked up a poster.

V

"What do you make of it, Harold?"

"I'm not sure, Clary. Seems from what he said to you at the saloon; he's hunted wild animals all over the world. But what could he be hunting here?"

Rubbing his star meditatively, the sheriff answered, "Looks to me like he came here with a licence to kill legal like."

"What? What do you mean?"

"Wal, everybody in town's seen these here posters with his picture on it. A few of them are gonna try to collect that reward money. Now, if Vent just doesn't give up, somebody's gonna get killed, and it'll probably be Vent. He's slow on the draw."

VI

"A short beer, bartender," said Vent.

"Better drink it fast, friend. There's a man been waiting for you for a couple of hours. I guess he wants to make some money."

Vent turned slowly and his right arm seemed to grow more rigid.

"Do you have business with me, sir?"

"Ya, ya, I have. About \$5,000 worth of business. Leastways it will be when I tote ya over to the bank."

"I take it then, you're an expert," said Vent, with a movement of his left hand toward the man's gun, carried low on the hip.

At the first move of Vent's hand, the man was already crouched for action. "Ya, I'm an expert all right. In fact, ya could say people like you are my business, sorta."

"Well, sir, to show a profit on me, I'm afraid you'll have to make use of your gun. You will notice I also am armed. Since the reward calls for the body of Peter Vent, and by the way I am not him, I shall consider a move toward your gun as an attempt on my life. Now you can suit yourself, friend."

The bounty hunter's hand darted for his gun. Vent's body twisted sinuously with his left shoulder pointed at the adversary. He was a flurry of coattails and blurred motion. It looked as though even his stiffened right arm had momentarily relaxed its vigilant rigidity to be part of the excitement. A single shot rang out. The bystanders watched the bounty hunter's body violently fling backwards with a yawning blank hole where his right eye had been. Vent holstered his gun.

"Did ya see that draw?" asked one.

"Faster'n Wild Bill."

"Like a rattler, I'm tellin' ya. Didn't even see him draw."

"Well, I'll tell ya somethin'. I don't need money that bad."

Vent walked to the door. "If the sheriff wants to see me, I believe I'm justified in calling it self-defense. Barkeep, whiskey for the house."

"Ya, the bounty hunter drew first. It was self-defense."

"He must've drawed first," said another. "I didn't even see Vent pull his gun."

The easterner silently moved out onto the street.

VII

Clary sat opposite Vent at the breakfast table of the hotel.

"I don't know howya did it, Vent. Lafi was pretty handy with a gun."

Vent awkwardly stirred his coffee. "Is there anything wrong with protecting one's life, Sheriff?"

"There's more than that to it. You looked for that gunfight yesterday. Well, O.K., it's done. Now you just pack up, head back east and we'll both be happier."

"I will Saturday noon, Sheriff. One way of the other, but not before then."

"What are you tryin' to prove? You got nerve? Tell me, Vent, you ever hunt tiger or bear with a .45?"

"No."

"Well, seems to me you must have had a lot of practise with that gun of your."

"A lot less than you think." And then, standing up abruptly, he added, "Anyway, Sheriff, I'll be leaving as I said before on Saturday. Good day."

Although it was the supper hour, the saloon was crowded. Cowpunchers, shopkeepers, gamblers — they all surrounded their new idol.

"Better not drink too much, Mr. Vent," said one. "Could be somebody might be lookin' for that reward money tonight."

"Why fine, fine. They need only carry my body over to the bank and pick up the money," Vent answered. He casually spun an empty shot glass in his hand. "Mr. Reason," he said suddenly, standing up and moving to the bar, "will you have a drink with me, sir, I didn't see you there or I would have asked you to join me before this."

"Yes, thank you, I will."

"Whiskey, barkeeper, whiskey," he said drunkenly. "Make it a double portion for this bookkeeper of death." He looked disdainfully at the banker. "Is that not so, Mr. Reason? Your ledger sheets do not show numbers today, do they? Have you been checking your balance sheet of liabilities and assets, Mr. Reason? Do you have the name of Vent under liabilities, and hope soon to be able to transfer it to the credit side of your ledger where it will then transform itself into a magical number? A magical number of one thousand dollars, Mr. Reason? But here's our drinks — let's have a toast to my continued longevity, Mr. Bookkeeper."

"Yes, yes, of course, Mr. Vent. But, really, Mr. Vent, I think you've had quite enough," he said nervously.

"Enough? Enough what, Mr. Reason? Adventure? Excitement? No! Never! Every day is an adventure in life, but only when it is garnished with danger. Have you ever killed a charging, trumpeting elephant, Mr. Reason? Or a magnificent lion protecting his cubs? No, of course not. But I have. And yet here, here in this dusty little town of yours I am the author of my greatest adventure. Do you understand, Mr. Bookkeeper?"

The banker was stunned as he understood fully now the true meaning of the posters and reward money. And, watching him, Vent saw the play of emotions on the banker's face.

"Yes, you do understand, don't you? My confidence in your intelligence was not misplaced. But look at all these others. They heard every word I said, yet they don't know that somewhere among them is my future quarry."

"Why, you're crazy, plain crazy," the banker stammered. "I'm —"

But a loud voice blanketing the clamour of the crowd interrupted him.

"Who's Vent?"

Slowly, pushing his jacket aside, Vent turned to face the direction of the voice and replied in an equally loud voice, "I am."

An open space quickly cleared between Vent and a big roughly dressed man. He looked at Vent skeptically.

"And you killed Lafi?"

"I did. And don't bother to introduce yourself. You're Ace Tyndall, called 'Ace' because you've never needed more than one shot to kill your man in a fight."

Slightly taken aback at Vent's knowledge of him, Tyndall appraised Vent more carefully and then decided that he had nothing to worry about particularly.

"Wal, Lafi was only a bounty hunter, anyway. Shooting his man in the back was more his style. But I guess you musta looked like easy game to him. But me, I'm a gun. You're gonna belong to me."

"Trying to talk up your nerve, Mr. Tyndall? Go ahead and draw, and I promise you, you'll not get up off the floor."

With a sardonic twist of his lips, Ace's hand blurred for his gun. Vent's body lashed out, left shoulder foremost as though trying to conceal the rapidity of his draw. His right arm was drowned by the waving gestures of his coat.

The noise of a shot reverberated through the room. Ace was slammed back to the bar where he remained upright for a moment and then slowly crumpled to his knees. He looked with surprise at his hands holding his stomach, while his head shook with disbelief that this could be happening to him.

"Ya tricked me," he barely whispered.

The wound seeped blood slowly and then violently vomited a scarlet cascade of finality.

Vent addressed the room, his face flushed with his victory. "What do you say, men? A fair fight?"

"Fair's could be," answered an old timer. "Ace drawed first. No question about it."

"Ya had to protect yourself, Mr. Vent. I seed him go for his gun," another added.

Vent drew a gold piece from his pocket and tossed it onto the bar. "Drinks for the house, barkeep. When the Sheriff comes in, tell him I'll be around to see him in the morning." Then, tipping his hat slightly, he said curtly. "Good night, gentlemen."

"If I didn't see it I wouldn't have believed it," one of the crowd said in awe. "Ace didn't even get his gun outa the holster."

"Wal, he's got nerve, I'll tell ya," said another. "Ace had so many notches he had to have a new handle made for his gun. Mr. Vent's the best man this country'll see for a long time to come."

Vent stood unseen, outside the doorway, listening to the comments with a smile of gratification. Happy, he walked nonchalantly to his hotel room.

VIII

"Are ya tryin' to tell me, Harold, that Ace didn't even get a shot off?"

"That's right. I saw Ace go for his gun. Vent seemed to kind of twist or half turn; then I heard the shot and Clint was backed up to the bar on his knees. I looked over at Vent and he was casually putting his gun back into the holster."

"There's got to be more to it than that! A man just doesn't come into town from the East, no practise with a .45, and kill off a gun like Ace Tyndall." The sheriff stared off into space speculatively and then continued, "Wait, Harold. Did you see Vent draw his gun? Think first, man — don't answer till you're positive."

"Well, uh, no. No, I didn't come to think of it."

"In other words, then, he egged Ace to draw first, so attention would be drawn away from himself. Hmm, and from the other story I got, he did the same with the bounty hunter."

"I told you, Clary, I told you what he said to me just before the fight. The man's crazy — insane — there's no doubt about it."

"Ya, I agree with you. He's crazy about adventure, the thrill of killin' a man. But I'll tell you this, Harold, he ain't crazy about gettin' killed his ownself. Listen, you might's well go on off home, and I'll see what I can figger out for tomorrow."

"All right, Clary. Good night."

XI

Although it was only eight in the morning, the sun was blistering hot, and a stream of perspiration trickled down Clary's forehead as he lounged across the street from the hotel. Suddenly he straightened.

"Hold it right there, Vent."

The Easterner stopped, perplexed. "What is it, Sheriff?"

"Wanna ask you somethin', Vent. Ever shot your gun this far before — say about a hundred feet?"

"I'm not sure I follow you, Sheriff. Why do you ask?" he queried uneasily.

"Sure, Vent. I'll explain it to you. Not that it'll come as news to you, but I'll explain anyway. I looked at Tyndall's body — hold it, Vent, just stay right where you are! Anyway, I looked at Tyndall's body this morning and it struck me as bein' a pretty small hole for a .45 bullet and so I got the Doc and he dug it out for me. Was just a little thing. Am I makin' sense to you?"

Visibly shaken, Vent asked, "Just what's on your mind Sheriff?"

"You're a murderer, Vent. But seems I can't arrest you for murder or anythin' else for that matter. So I'm gonna try to find a way to kill you legal like. Now listen careful. I know there's nothin' wrong with your arm — that's where you got your holdout gun. I know all you gotta do is bend your arm and the gun slides into your hand. Pretty neat, Vent, just like an Indian knife trick I know. You don't have to draw, do you? No, it's like playin' God: you just point your finger and say 'you're dead' and the man in front of you dies..

"Well, you're not God, Vent. I'm gonna show you what you are. See my right hand, Vent? Behind my back? Well, my gun's in it. See my holster, Vent? It's empty. I'm comin' for you and the first move you make I start shootin'. It's self-defense for both of us, Vent, so shoot anytime your're ready."

Clary started to walk slowly toward Vent with one hand behind his back. The Easterner was a sombre shadow cast from the ground, the only motion of life was the sweat pouring down his face which he dared not wipe lest it be his death warrant. The sheriff stopped a few feet in front of Vent and slowly brought his hand from behind his back. The hand was empty and Vent was shocked to life.

"You didn't even have —"

"That's right, Vent, no gun at all."

Vent's eyes narrowed in anger, and his right arm started its move for the kill. Sheriff Clary's arm flashed and the gleaming hilt of a knife stuck grotesquely from Vent's throat. Vent sank slowly to the dusty street, his wide-open eyes glaring in astonishment at the sheriff.

"Like I told you, Vent, it's like an Indian knife trick I know."

THE BEATNICK

by A. Gillies

Jim Harris was slouched on a bench in the hall when I reached the apartment shortly before ten that night. His sandy crewcut and ruddy complexion made him look like an Ivy Leaguer rather than a private investigator. Only his forty-year-old eyes showed he was not the college type.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," I told him as we went inside. "I got hung up in the traffic."

"That's all right. Mr. Harper," he said, nodding. "I haven't been waiting long. You said you wanted this wrapped up tonight."

He handed me several sheets of paper. "That's the whole week just as you ordered — times, places, the whole works."

I tossed them on the table and told him, "Just give me the essentials."

He studied me closely and suggested, "You won't like it."

"I was aware of that when I hired you," I answered; "lets have it."

Harris shrugged and took a few moments to light a cigarette. "Well, as you suspected, your wife's seeing another man."

Keeping my expression wooden, I asked, "Who?"

"A fellow named Hardy. He has an apartment in the Village. He's an artist of some sort — maybe I should say a would-be painter. He's new to the game and seems like a serious guy — doesn't mingle with the odd balls down there. But he really plays the game."

"How's that?" I asked.

"You know. Dark glasses, sloppy sweater and jeans — the whole bit."

"I can't believe Helen could be attracted to a man like that," I said.

"It's all there," Harris said, indicating the papers he had handed me, "and every bit is true."

"You've seen them together?"

"More than once. She meets him in some espresso joint down there; then afterwards they head for his pad."

I said nothing for several seconds. Then I told him, "You've done a good job. You asked for fifty a day and expenses. Is that right, Harris?"

"Yes, sir."

I crossed the room to my desk and retrieved a check book and a .45 revolver. I filled out a check for the amount he had asked for and handed it to him while pocketing the gun.

Harris looked briefly at the check before putting it in his wallet; then, looking at me shrewdly, he asked. "What's with the gun, Mr. Harper? You aren't going to do anything foolish, are you?"

I smiled at him without humor and said, "Your work's done, Harris. Thank you and good night."

But he didn't move. He frowned thoughtfully for a moment or so and then asked, "If you're thinking of using that gun on either one of them, or both, don't you think I've got a right to know?"

"What do you mean," I asked, "you have a right?"

"The police might not believe I didn't know it when I ran them down for you."

"Well, if I do see them and something happens, you won't have to worry, Harris. Now I'm asking you to leave."

Harris left then without any further argument, but the way he slammed the door on his way out spoke volumes for the way he was feeling. I stared at the door for several seconds and then I went to the liquor cabinet and poured out a large shot for myself.

I was nursing my fourth drink when the door buzzer rang. I walked to the door slowly, wondering if it was Harris returning to preach to me some more. I opened the door and a stocky man with an expressionless face stared back at me.

"Yes?"

"Are you Mr. Harper?" he asked.

"That's right."

"May I come in?"

I stepped aside, allowing him to enter the room. As I closed the door and turned to him, he held out his I.D. card.

"What can I do for you, Sergeant?"

"I have a complaint, Mr. Harper."

"Complaint?" I stuttered. "By whom?"

"A Mr. Harris said you ordered him out of here with a gun."

"That's a lie. I told him to leave, but not with a gun."

"And why would he lie, Mr. Harper?"

"I don't know," I answered. "He did a job for me and maybe he wasn't satisfied with what I paid him."

"Yes, I know about the job. Mr. Harris told me everything. But what are you going to do with the gun, Mr. Harper?"

I tried to keep down the irritation as I answered him.

"Look, Sergeant, I told you the man was lying. There is no gun, never was. Now, if you will excuse me, I have to grab a plane. I'm leaving for Denver tonight."

He wasn't disturbed by my tone, but he moved to the door nevertheless, saying smoothly, "All right, Mr. Harper, there's no gun."

When he had left, I poured one more shot and threw it back. Then I went to the closet and removed my sample case. Inside it was the most valuable consignment I had ever handled. Almost seventy-five thousand dollars in perfectly cut diamonds. I grabbed my coat and with one last look around I hit the light switch and left the office.

I swung my car into the traffic and moved slowly away. I noted with satisfaction the pair of headlights that followed me across town. My destination was a run-down building in the Village. In almost no time I had parked my car, and then taking up my sample case I climbed the paint-scarred stairway to the third floor.

I stood for a moment in front of the door, and then wrenched the door handle and almost hurtled myself into the apartment. The lights were on but no one was to be seen in the first room. I started towards the adjoining room but I had covered only a few feet when I heard steps behind me and Sergeant Hugh's voice.

"Hold it, Harper," he yelled

I swung to face him as he entered the room. Without another word, he pinned me to the wall going over me for the gun. When he took it from my pocket, I tried to grab it from his hand and we fell to the floor in a scuffle for possession. He swung a blackjack across my head and a brilliant flower blossomed in my vision and then blackness.

The trip back to consciousness was a painful one, but then I finally made it, I found myself sitting on the bed. As I shook my head and looked around I found the Sergeant and my wife staring at me. She avoided my eyes when I tried to look at her. Sergeant Hughs helped me to my feet.

"What was in it?" he asked.

"In what?"

"In your brief case. What was in it?"

I looked around but couldn't see the brief case.

"Where is it?" I asked.

"It's gone — both it and Hardy."

"But how — how could it be?"

"What was in it?" Hughs insisted.

I put my hand to my head and fell back to the bed and said, "That trip to Denver I told you about. I had a consignment to deliver seventy-five thousand dollars in diamonds."

Hughs gave a long whistle and then asked, "But how did Hardy know that?"

"I don't know, Sergeant," I answered glancing at my wife.

The Sergeant, correctly interpreting my glance, turned to her and asked, "How about it, Mrs. Harper? How much did you tell him?"

My wife seemed taken aback for a few seconds. "Well, I did tell him the

sort of work my husband did, but I didn't think this would be the result."

"What I want to know," I said, cutting in, "is how did he manage it?"

Hughs pointed towards the window leading to the fire escape and said, "That way. When I hit you, he and your wife came to see what the commotion was all about. She helped me get you on the bed and Hardy was supposed to get a wet towel but I guess he had other ideas."

I cut him off then, saying, "Sergeant, I'm pretty beat. Can we put the rest off until tomorrow?"

He stared at me amazedly and said, "You just got robbed of a fortune and all you can think of is sleep." Then his tone changed as he added, "I guess you're right, Harper. I forgot the clout I gave you — maybe I should take you to a hospital."

"No, it's all right, Sergeant. A couple of aspirins and some sleep is what I need most. Just help me to my car, please."

He and my wife helped me down the stairs and into the car. He looked quizzically at me as Helen slid in behind the wheel. Knowing what he was thinking, I told him, "It's all right, Sergeant. For now, the matter between me and my wife is forgotten. Any more on the subject will be handled in court."

He looked at me worriedly. "I have your word on that?" he asked, and I nodded my head assuringly.

"I'm going to have the boys come over and shake the place down for fingerprints; and if your wife has a picture of him, we might get him before morning."

"I'm sorry, Sergeant, but I haven't got one," my wife answered. "And even if I did, I don't think it would help much — he looks just like a thousand people that live around here."

"Well, it's just a thought," he said. "I'll let you folks go now, but I'll be seeing you first thing in the morning."

He closed the door and we pulled away into the traffic flowing past. We both remained silent until several blocks had been traversed.

"What would you have done if he hadn't hit you?" Helen asked.

"The main thing is, he did," I answered, "And if he didn't — well. I never gave it any thought. All that matters now is that we keep a cool head tomorrow when the questions come up."

"When do we see Harry, alias Mr. Hardy?" she asked.

"In a few weeks when this cools off we meet him and split it up."

Helen grinned suddenly and said, "Once he gets rid of that beatnik outfit, the police won't know who to look for."

I smiled with her, feeling very confident.

OPERATION SCORPION

by Mike Bailey

The following story was not written as a short story but rather as simply part of a larger work, a novel, being written by the author. It should not therefore be judged as a "short story" form. But inasmuch as the author was a student of the creative writing class, this section of the novel was chosen as representative of his writing ability.

The full Asian moon reflected on the black water and showed a khaki dressed figure leaning against a boat on the river bank. He watched as two figures came toward him out of the trees.

"It's a cold night" said one of the men.

"It's warmer in the south," said the man with the boat.

"But colder in the north."

They shook hands.

"The committee expected you yesterday, but decided to wait another day."

"We were delayed by a patrol," said the first man. "We'll get our packs."

They walked back to the bushes and pulled out two large packs and knotted tubes of rice rolled in parachute silk. These were put aboard and the three men climbed in. The man in the khaki pushed out into the river. They crossed into the shadows, and travelled downstream over the oily water.

The guide pulled up to a short dock, tied up the boat and helped the others with their gear. They slung their packs on one shoulder and followed him down a jungle path into a village. Approaching a mud and thatch hut he clapped his hands twice, and opened the door.

Inside six men were seated around a bamboo table. Their faces illuminated by an oil lamp. The guide ushered his visitors in and closed the door behind them.

"Gentlemen," he said. "Colonel Chiang Lee and Major Ing Van Duon of Viet Nam Peoples Army of Liberation.

The men at the table rose, bowed slightly, and came forward to shake hands. The last introduced himself as Lao Tem, and led the visitors to places at the table.

Chiang Lee looked at the circle of serious faces. He'd been in these situations before, and wondered how many of these officers, and how few of their men, had ever been in action against a real enemy. So many of these villagers thought they

were trained soldiers after hi-jacking a few tires from a supply truck. Yet all their lives and the success of the mission might depend on anyone of them during the next few weeks.

Lao Tem, who was the senior of the group, rose from his seat. He bowed slightly toward Chiang and Ing.

"We've heard much of your work in the Northern Provinces," he said, "and we are proud to be able to assist you. We've been told to collect much information for you, which of course we've done." He indicated the pile of papers on the table before him. "There are a few things though, that we find hard to understand."

"In war, there's much which is hard to understand," interrupted Chiang.

"Of course," Tem agreed, "But retribution from Saigon is usually fast, and always final." He displayed his large white teeth in a knowing smile. "Also these areas you ask about are heavily guarded. They're held as positions of great importance by the nationalists and by the Americans."

"You've therefore found the answer to your question," returned Chiang. These bases are of greater importance than you think."

Tem looked at Chiang for a moment. He saw a man who comprehended things with that quick confidence that shows an agile mind. Before he had time to continue, one of his Captains addressed Chiang.

"If they're so important, why aren't they bombed by our aircraft?"

Tem frowned. The meeting wasn't going the way he had planned.

"Do you know what's stored in those sheds," asked Chiang.

"Of course we know," said Tem, regaining the conversation. "We have copies of the shipping lists, less than a week old."

"Then you've answered another of your questions."

A cool silence fell over the hut. Chiang had a mission to accomplish and little enough time to do it. The last thing he wanted was to lose the friendship and assistance of these men. He looked at Tem, who had quietly sat down.

"Couldn't you use a few hundred automatic rifles, and several thousand rounds of ammunition? Not to mention mortars and grenade throwers, all new and ready for use."

"Of course," Tem smiled. "But there wouldn't be any of us left to use them." A murmur of approval went around the table. Chiang leaned forward.

"Do you think Major Van Duon and I came here unprepared?" He swept the assembly with a withering glance. "Do you think we came to offer you nothing but a suicide plan?"

He paused long enough for his words to take effect. "No gentlemen. We've heard of your work here in the south, and the Commanders of the Peoples Army have been impressed. If they thought that bombing was the answer, the operation would have been completed by now. But there is another reason why this has to be a ground attack." Everyone listened and watched Chiang.

"It's essential," he went on, "that the Americans think of this as another of

your daring raids. The Government mustn't know that we realize how important these bases are." He paused again, waiting to see who would be the first to speak. A stocky man in peasants pyjamas leaned into the circle of light.

"There are two of these bases. When we've captured one they'll double or treble the defences on the other. Do you have a plan for overcoming them a second time?"

"No," said Chiang without hesitation. "They'll both be taken on the same night."

A shocked silence was followed by an outburst from everyone at the table.

"Those bases have about a thousand men."

"They're all well trained."

"We've only got about three hundred."

Chiang stood up waited for quiet.

"Gentlemen, we need about two hundred men, and if you'll give me your attention for fifteen minutes I'll show you how it can be done."

Ing quietly unfolded a map and spread it on the table. Chiang picked up a pencil.

"Now, Camp #5 is here, and Camp #14 is over here." He drew several lines on the map and spent over half an hour outlining the timing and placement of men and firepower. The attention and serious questions of his listeners showed their interest. He also felt sure they were impressed.

"It's a well constructed plan," agreed Tem when he finished. "But you mentioned another reason why these bases must be attacked from the ground."

"There is a very important reason."

Chiang crossed the room and pulled a small book from his pack.

"We're not the only ones who've read this edition of Mao's pamphlet on guerrilla warfare. Some Americans have also read it. They know we're well advanced in the second phase of the war, and they're determined not to make the same mistake as the French at Dien Bien Phu."

"Counter Insurgents," said Tem more to himself than aloud.

"Exactly. Giap was defeated three times by the French. He had to wait another three years before victory was finally his."

"Are we that close to gathering our strength," asked a voice at the table.

"We're close enough that Nationalist guerrilla units supplied from a growing number of bases such as we have here could delay us beyond our advantage point."

"Of course," Tem added, "that's why they mustn't know we've seen through their plan."

Chian walked back to the table.

"That's why we're here, and asked for your assistance. Now you know why together we must succeed with *Operation Scorpion*."

Chiang and Ing set up their headquarters in a cave. It was less comfortable than staying in the village, but safer.

Every day they were supplied with fresh milk and vegetables. News also

came daily about the activities at the camps, and of their own men in training. They built a sand table to demonstrate final strategy, and made lists of badly needed equipment.

Two days after the meeting with Tem's committee they had their first piece of good luck. A truck had been stopped on a quiet jungle road and several cases of American equipment confiscated. The second box the patrol opened contained four Walkie Talkie sets, complete with spare batteries.

Chiang congratulated the Captain, and shook hands with every guerilla in the patrol. His freedom of praise, and his fame as a guerrilla officer made him a hero among the soldiers. He left two of the radios in the village, and carried the others to the cave. He found Ing studying the map.

"I took a trip up to the highway lookout this morning," he told Chiang. "Those radios have given me an idea."

Chiang grunted and set down looking at the map. It was mostly green, low lying ground with some yellow areas, and the odd tan and brown hill. Snaking across the map was the red line of Route 13. It followed, where possible, the dividing line between green and yellow. This way the roadbuilders avoided the swamps, and found adequate drainage in the wet season.

It was a dirt road for most of its tortuous length, but in this land of the ox plough and sampan it was a highway.

Ing pointed to a tan patch beside the road. "Our man's sitting here. He lists all traffic and makes estimates of troop movements. But see how the road loops and passes behind him." Ing ran his pencil over the loop.

"Can he see the road on either side?" asked Chiang.

"Oh yes; clearly from up here."

"How far?"

"Two or three miles to the north on and off through the trees, and almost twice as far to the south."

Chiang nodded. "Two men up here with a radio ...", he made a small mark on the red line about the centre of the loop, "and a road block there." They looked at each other and laughed.

Later that day they were sitting in Tem's hut. The relief lookout man was with them, and the last few days reports lay on the table. They asked him several questions.

"Let's go through this once more," said Chiang. "You say this convoy goes through every day between fourteen and fifteen hundred hours?"

"Yessir," the man nodded.

"Alright. And it always consists of an armoured car, four to six supply trucks, and an open truck with the guards."

"Yessir. The armoured car always leads, and the guard truck is always the last."

"I'm surprised they use an open truck," said Ing.

"Well it's got built up sides Sir, and they usually have a machine gun mounted in the back."

"Thank you," said Chiang. "That's all." The man saluted and left the hut closing the door behind him. They all sat quietly thinking.

"Those armoured cars are tough," said Tem finally. "And they'll never open the top for you to toss in a grenade."

"Do you have any mortar shells?" asked Ing.

"Yes a few 81 mm."

"If you'll give me two of those, I'll look after the armoured car."

Back in the cave Ing disconnected the concussion caps from the shells, and wired in a time delay fuse. The whole assembly was mounted in a rough basket along with a powerful magnet from an old generator. Well pleased with their days work they climbed into their hammocks early.

Dawn found them measuring the road and selecting a large tree for the road block. Before noon, hides had been constructed for forty men, and ranges checked with dummy grenades. The observers and their radio had been installed on the hill-top, and the other radio hidden close to the log. Reception was good both ways.

Several trucks passed and once a U.S. helicopter stuttered by overhead. Time dragged by.

Five minutes before two the word was given to blast the tree. It fell heavily in place, and evidence of the blasting was removed. Men posted close in case the road had to be cleared fast. Another forty minutes passed before they received the signal.

"Convoy approaching from the south. Armoured car leading five trucks, and one rearguard." Everyone was alerted.

Ing made an adjustment inside his basket and started walking down the road. His timing was good. He was about fifty yards from a bend hiding the fallen tree when the convoy came down the road. Standing almost in the centre of the road he tried to flag down the leading vehicle.

At first he didn't think it was going to stop. It did finally and the turret swung around. Ing found himself staring down the muzzle of a cannon.

Waving his free hand, and chattering about the fallen tree, he moved closer. His basket came alive on his arm and swung out to meet the mass of metal. A slatted window opened, and a face demanded how far ahead the obstruction was.

Ing let go his basket and held his hands about two feet apart.

"About this round," he shouted.

Someone spoke inside and the driver let in the clutch. The heavy car surged forward forcing Ing to leap for the ditch. He stayed there and watched. The driver stopped at the bend where he could see the tree, and watch the convoy as well. He radioed the truck in the rear, and several men climbed over the side and dropped to the road. That was as far as they went.

With a roar the armoured car disappeared in smoke and flame, followed by several well placed grenades in the truck. When the smoke and dust cleared the other drivers found themselves surrounded by black uniformed figures. The

armoured car stood smoking with the turret torn off, and the rearguard either dead or laying spreadeagled in the road under guard.

Chiang found Ing sitting in the ditch rubbing his bruised ribs.

"I thought he was going to blast you with the cannon."

"I bet now he wishes he had."

They climbed back onto the road laughing.

The remains of the armoured car and the damaged truck were being pushed off the road, while others were removing the road block. Several of Tems men, dressed in green Nationalist uniforms, started the big trucks, and drove northward. They turned off the highway by a narrow canal, and drove about a mile into the jungle. Here the cases of guns, ammunition and medical supplies were loaded into small boats, and distributed to different villages. Finally the tires were removed and the trucks set on fire.

When the equipment was listed Chiang realized they had sufficient supplies for the operation. A meeting was called and a date set. They had six days.

Ing was to lead the first attack on Camp 14 with 148 men. Chiang, with eighty men was to surround Camp 5 and wait Ing's radio signal, 'Mission Accomplished'.

Each unit spent at least one day around the sand table, everyone knew the camp layout, and his position. Others moved supplies from regular caches and concealed them closer to the target areas.

The last day was spent in cleaning weapons and getting as much rest as possible. Chiang lay in his hammock reading while Ing filled pouches with ammunition clips. Towards evening a woman brought a message from Tem. Ing startled her by suddenly roaring with laughter.

"Its the highway lookout report", he said. "Listen to this. '14.40 Hours. Convoy heading north. Four trucks and three armoured cars'." Chiang dropped his book and laughed out loud. The woman returned to the village wondering why their men were so impressed.

Chiang lay on his stomach in the shadows and watched the camp through the screen of leaves. He was acquainted with the layout from the plan, but this was his first actual look at the objective.

The towers were spaced about a hundred yards apart, and weren't as high as he'd expected. A powerful light on either side shone over the barbed wire, but there was enough shadow for a guerrilla to slip through. An occasional sentry wandered along inside the wire, but weeks of inactivity had dulled their sense of awariness.

He slipped back to his position and waited for his scouts. They returned and reported everyone in position. The long wait started. He tried to keep his thoughts from the possibility of Ing's failure, and comforted himself with mental pictures of the trip to Hanoi. He looked at the resting scouts lying relaxed on the hard ground. They had all grown accustomed to the rough life. Even the insects accepted their presence continuing their nightly concert.

About a half mile away two blood smeared figures in torn green uniforms were hurrying as fast as they could towards the camp, shouting as they came.

The gate guard called his officer, who in turn roused the relief guards and the camp commander. By the time the men were within fifty yards of the gates, and their uniforms could be seen in the lights.

"They're Arvins", said one of the guards." Shall we open the gates."

The officer of the guard looked at the Commander.

"No. It may be a trick to get us to do just that."

"They look badly hurt, Sir," said the guard.

The Commander stared at the two staggering figures.

"Get back in the shadows, all of you. They may be carrying grenades."

Everyone left the roadway and covered the two figures as they staggered up to the gate.

"Help. Send help, fast", panted the first man. The second slid to the ground.

"Where are you from?" asked the Commander.

"Camp 14. We are being attacked by Vietcong".

A muffled conversation took place in the shadows. The Commander had to do some rapid thinking.

"Let them in, but be careful". He turned to the guard officer. "It may still be a trick. Get in contact with Camp 14 and let me speak to the Commanding Officer".

The gate was partly opened and a guard slipped out to help carry in the injured man. They all filed into the guardhouse. The Commander sat at the desk, and lit a cigarette. He nodded to a guard who started searching them.

"I have a pistol," said the man laying it on the desk. One of the guards picked it up.

"It's empty, Sir." He passed it across to the Commander who smelled the barrel.

"Who are you?" he asked without looking up.

"43196 Private Ling, Sir".

"And you say you're from Camp 14?"

"Yessir."

"That's thirty five miles away. How did you get here?"

"We got away in a jeep, Sir, but we ran out of gas. It's about three miles down the road."

"And you walked from there?"

"We ran as fast as we could, Sir."

"You mean you deserted your regiment in battle."

"No, Sir. We came to get help. This is the nearest camp."

"How long ago was this?"

"I don't know, Sir. It must have taken us about thirty minutes in the jeep."

"And they were fighting when you left?"

"Yessir."

The Commander leaned back in his chair with a smile. "Then you can claim you didn't desert." The man was silent, looking confused. "Have you no answer to that, eh private?"

The telephone rang on the desk. The Commander picked it up, and listened for several seconds.

"Keep trying", he snapped and dropped the receiver.

"If you're trying to radio Camp 14, Sir, you won't reach them. The radio shack got a direct hit from a mortar or a grenade."

"What was your position at the camp?" interrupted the Commander.

"We manned 'H' Tower, Sir."

Then how did you get to find the jeep?"

"When the attack started, some of the towers and the gates were blown up. Ours tipped over and threw us outside the wire."

"Go on".

"Well, Sir, I was stunned at first but I found Cpl. Hoi laying beside me." He nodded toward the other man sitting against the wall. "I started running toward the gate and this jeep was standing beside the guardhouse."

The Commander was worried. The radio silence bore out the man's story. If Camp 14 was in real trouble, he was wasting valuable time. He made his decision and picked up the phone.

"Any news from 14?", he listened. "Then get me Command Headquarters in Saigon. I'll be there in two minutes," he dropped the phone. "Captain, get about three hundred of your best men ready and get them into trucks. I'll confirm it with H.Q." He hurried out.

Ten minutes later two thirds of the trained men at Camp 5 rolled through the gate and down the dark road. The guards closed the gate and watched the heaving tail lights out of sight.

Chiang was a man with a serious mind, but when he smiled, every inch of his body smiled too. He was wearing one of his all over smiles as he watched the last truck disappear down the road. He waited for ten long minutes, then gripped the arm of his best scout.

Pointing to his watch he held up five fingers. The man nodded and slid quietly forward. Chiang followed mentally, looking at his watch. Two minutes to get under the wire and out of the range of the lights. Check for sentries. Another minute, down the side of one of the barrack buildings, and across the road to the wall of the radio shack. Slap a handful of plastic explosive on the wall and light a one minute fuse. Run like hell towards the storage buildings, and wait for the blast.

Everyone outside the wire also waited for the blast. This would not only destroy Camp 5's contact with the outside, but was a spectacular signal for the attack to begin. Everyone was poised.

Two men aimed grenade throwers at each of the eight towers. Two more at the open gables of the barrack huts. Others lay in the shadows clutching their automatic weapons. They knew they shouldn't watch the dim outline of the Radio Shack, but it was like a magnet to their eyes.

Although expected, it was still a shock to their senses when the mud wall dissolved in a blinding flash. A shower of dried mud and stones rained down on

the thick leaves around them, but by then they were in action.

Several of the barracks and most of the towers burst into flames. Somewhere a heavy machine gun chattered in the dark, but well placed grenades soon silenced it.

Two breaches were made in the wire, and the attackers streamed through. Most of the fighting took place in the area of the guard house. Because of the disguised guerrillas this was the only building left intact.

Men came tumbling out of the burning buildings. Some clutching wounds, a few holding weapons. Many died in their beds. The attack had been so sudden, and the element of surprise so much in their favour that resistance was overcome with a minimum of fighting.

Chiang ran to the storage buildings. The doors had been rolled back and by the light of the fires men were sorting the wooden cases. Others were setting explosives with unlit fuses.

When they had taken this base, and removed what they wanted, it had to be completely destroyed. In a month the jungle would have taken over. Mud brick and thatch would be replaced by stalk and leaf.

The roof of the centre building had started to burn, and men were dragging out cases marked 'Explosives' in Chinese and English. There was enough dynamite to flatten Saigon, but they were more interested in small arms. Most of the fighting had stopped, and the prisoners were herded together in one of the lesser damaged barrack buildings. All efforts were now being made to load the three remaining trucks, and setting fuses.

"Colonel Lee", someone called. Chiang looked around. "Hueys." He looked to the south but couldn't see anything through the smoke. Running away from the buildings he gazed at the dark sky. He still couldn't see anything, but above the roar and crackle of the flames he could hear the stutter of the big helicopters.

"Get those fuses set," he shouted, pulling a small powder rocket from his tunic. He lit the fuse and watched it leap upward through the smoke. It exploded high in the air, discharging several green balls of fire. Being a good soldier he hated the sign of retreat, but the main part of their mission had been accomplished, and he had to get as many of his men back as possible.

As soon as the green signal was seen, all fuses were set. Men who had charged into the camp twenty minutes before now dashed for the safety of the jungle. Illuminated as they were by the light of the fires, they were sitting ducks for the helicopters.

Chiang had another stretch of wire cut, and waited while his men, several helping wounded comrades, escaped into the safety of the trees.

The only disadvantage to the helicopters was the shortage of safe landing space. The large rotors made it impossible for them to set down between the buildings. This left the parade square and the roadways, but even here there was danger from the sparks and burning debris.

The first one landed in the square. Chiang held his fire. He didn't want to draw attention to their safest escape route. A black figure ran towards it,

throwing grenades as he ran. He was cut down by a blast of fire from the side turret, but one of the cylinders tumbled into the cabin. Two soldiers jumped clear as the machine rocked on its skids and fell apart.

Two were landed in the roadway. Chiang emptied a clip into the nearest one and ran through the wire. Guerillas cannot retreat in order as a regular army, but fade into the background. Two of Tem's men went with him.

"There's a trail not far from here," one said. "But we must travel south and west to keep away from the road."

Scrambling through the trees they followed a stream bed for almost a mile. Before they reached the trail a tremendous explosion shook the ground. Chiang climbed a tree and looked back. They had been travelling downhill, but above the trees he could see the flickering glow in the sky. Sound also travelled better above the trees, and he could hear the constant report as the flames reached the cases of grenades and clips.

He slid back to the ground.

"Mission accomplished," he said and they hurried on.

It was almost dawn before Chiang got back to the cave. Tired as he was he refused to sleep until Ing had given a complete report on the destruction of Camp 14. As with Chiang, fighting had been kept to a minimum, and all resistance fast overcome.

"Did the two rescuers arrive," asked Ing with a grin.

"Just like clockwork." Chiang described the events at Camp 5.

"We heard the Hueys going over, but had no way of warning you. I guess the two Nationalists left the radio in the bushes." They pulled off their boots and tumbled into their hammocks.

"Tem must have at least a thousand new rifles and enough ammunition to last him for years."

"Good," grunted Chiang.

"And both camps" But Chiang was already asleep. He knew all about the camps, and he was smiling again.

In less than two hours they were awakened by a Huey working its way down the valley. They watched it through binoculars as it passed over Tem's village.

"It's dropping bombs," cried Ing, but no explosions followed.

"They're leaflets," said Chiang. "We must get ready to leave."

They broke up the sand table and buried their garbage. Everything that hinted at habitation was destroyed. Finally their hammocks and other possessions were strapped into their packs.

While they were cleaning and oiling their weapons, Tem and their original guides stepped into the cave.

"It's not safe to travel by daylight today," Tem said, seating himself on a rock. "Taki here will stay with you and take you across the river tonight."

"What about the leaflets," asked Ing. "We saw the Huey this morning. We thought at first he was bombing the village."

"Just a standard leaflet. We are urged to leave our homes and report to the nearest Government fort within twenty-four hours."

"And if not?"

Tem shrugged.

"Oh, tomorrow morning they will come again giving us twelve hours."

"Will your people go?" asked Ing.

"Why should they?"

"They would be safe."

"Safe," repeated Tem. "What is safe? Would you stop fighting if the Nationalists told you you'd be safe in their fort?"

"Of course not. We have the cause to keep us fighting, but we are not women and children."

Chiang put his hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Tem knows that," he said. "But his people have a cause too. They are farmers and this is their land."

Ing turned to him and would have spoken but Chiang went on. "The Government does nothing for the farmer but charge him taxes, and we do little enough for him yet. Apart from getting his sons killed and his crops burned."

Ing looked back at Tem. "But those men who fought with us last night. They must believe in our work, they must believe in what we are fighting for."

"Most of them do," agreed Tem.

Chiang dropped his hand and walked to the cave entrance. "Don't forget Ing, we are trained political soldiers. We have seen the results of our policies in several countries amongst different peoples. Many of Tem's people have never left this valley. They are interested in their crops, not politics."

"But they fought with us last night," argued Ing. "Many of them died last night."

"They fought with us because we came to them and asked them for their help," replied Chiang. "Now go down and ask them to leave their homes and follow us back north. You'd find a different reaction."

There was a silence broken finally by Tem as he got to his feet.

"Those are words of wisdom, my young friend." He took Ing's hand and shook it warmly. "One must never get too old to learn from experience."

He shook hands with Chiang and went down the hill towards the village.

There was no moon that night, but the stars gleamed in the blue-black sky. After a few minutes, a good pair of eyes could make out the river bank and the forest in the background.

The boat nudged the muddy bank and two dark figures got out. They shook hands with the third who stayed in the bow, then pushed the boat back into the dark water.

The man in the boat drifted, waiting for the current to carry him downstream. One of the figures on the bank waved, and then they were gone.

THE VIGIL

by Gerry Morgan

The soft shadows of evening were slowly shifting across the sky as I drove up to the old mansion. Every now and then a flash of lightning would light up the area around the house. As far as haunted houses were concerned, this place was a perfect example.

This excursion into the unknown had started earlier in the afternoon when I arrived in Brownsville. I had gone into the town's only bar for a drink and had overheard a conversation between the barkeep and the only other customer. After he left, I called the barkeep over.

"Say," I asked, "was that fellow talking about a haunted house?"

"Yeah, the old Ramsey place. Some folks there have seen some strange happenings up there on that hill."

"You don't believe in ghosts, do you?" I laughingly asked.

"Well, I don't know—but there are spooks in that house," he replied seriously.

As I was laughing at his statement, the old guy who had been talking to the barkeep when I came in re-entered.

"Our friend here," I said, pointing towards the barkeep, "was just telling me about your town's haunted house."

"You sound like you doubt the story, young man," he replied.

"Oh, come now, you're not expecting me to believe there really are ghosts around here, are you?"

"There's a story around here, young fellow, that says no one can spend the night in the Ramsey house."

"That's sheer nonsense!" I snorted.

"If you believe it's nonsense, would you be willing to stay overnight there?" he asked glancing slyly at Pete, the barkeep.

"Of course I would, if I felt like it," I answered.

"I'll bet you a hundred dollars that you can't stay all night in that house," Pete said.

"Now I feel like it. It's a bet," I answered as I got up and walked to the door. "Where is this place?"

"Just drive straight out Main Street for a mile and you'll see the house on top of a high hill," Pete replied.

I left.

"Well, George, it looks like we got some spooking to do tonight," said the barkeep.

"Yep, I guess I better go over and tell Mike and Bill to be ready," his customer answered.

"Tell Mike to bring those masks and robes with him; we'll need them."

"Do you think this guy will be harder to scare than the others we've pulled this on?" asked George.

"No, this young city-slicker will be just as easy as the rest. I just hope he don't give us no trouble over paying the hundred," Pete answered and burst into a deep laugh.

So here I was sitting in my car looking at the Ramsey mansion. I had slept until five o'clock and then had something to eat at the hotel restaurant and drove out here when it started getting dark. I was "hep" to those two old birds in the bar: no doubt they would try to scare me out of the place before morning. It was probably an old stunt of theirs, getting suckers to bet and then scaring them out of the house. But this time they had picked on the wrong guy. I had a Colt .38 in the glove compartment and I would show them who the suckers were.

Taking the gun and a flashlight from the glove compartment, I got out of the car and headed towards the house. The rain was starting to fall and the sky was getting darker. The windows of the place were all boarded up and the old house creaked in the wind. And the door squeaked when I opened it. A funny smell hung over the place, a smell usually associated with funeral parlours—the smell of death. I turned on the flashlight and slowly entered. The sounds of my footsteps echoed hollowly through the room. There wasn't much furniture and what there was there was mostly rotted with age. Everything was covered with a thick layer of dust. I walked through all the lower rooms looking into closets and around corners. I wasn't searching for any particular thing, but just wanted to be ready for whatever little trick my two friends had in store for me. As I pierced the darkness with the beam of the flashlight, I could see large rats scurrying across the floor.

After I had thoroughly checked all the rooms on the ground floor, I found a corner in the main room to lie down in and wait. I must have dozed off, for suddenly I was startled by a scraping noise. "Here they come," I thought. I checked the .38 and stood up in the corner. I watched the door, planning to surprise them when they entered the room; but it was me who got the surprise for rather than the two old men I expected, a beautiful young woman entered. She walked slowly into the room, her white robes flowing gracefully with her movements. She had long black hair that framed an angelic face. I had never before seen such a lovely girl. The only thing about her that was not beautiful was the double-bladed axe she carried in her right hand.

"Hi, Babe, who sent you in here—your old man?" I asked, moving out of the corner.

But she never answered, just looked in my direction, raised the axe above her head and started towards me.

"Those guys must want my hundred bucks pretty bad to send one of their daughters in here."

Still no answer from her.

"Look, sweetheart, I'm hep to your act so drop the axe and let's make the best of this situation."

By now she was only a couple of feet from me. She still hadn't uttered a word. I looked closely at her lovely pale face. Her eyes seemed to be afire; I could almost see sparks in them.

I pointed the gun at her and said, "Your act is very good but you better drop the axe or I'm liable to forget this is just a game."

I jumped back as she swung the axe at my head. I could feel the wind from the moving blade as it flashed by my face.

"That's enough!" I yelled in anger.

But she only lifted the axe and chopped at me again. I'd had enough nonsense. I didn't feel like being chopped in half by any dame, no matter how pretty. As she swung again, I pointed the gun at her and started pulling the trigger, but still she advanced without a quiver as the bullets slammed right through her. I couldn't move as I watched her raise the axe above my head. I screamed.

Outside, the rain was still falling lightly as four men moved through the darkness towards the old mansion.

"There's his car, fellows, so he's still here," whispered old George.

"Bill, you and Mike put on those masks and robes," Pete directed.

"Sure, Pete," Bill said. "Are you sure you and George can handle him to get the money after Mike and I scare him out?"

"Yeah, he won't give us any trouble after he sees this shotgun I got here," Pete said, holding up the rifle.

"Come on, Bill, let's get this over. I'm thirsty and I want to get back to the bar for a drink," said Mike.

Just as Mike and Bill started towards the house, the sound of gunshots pierced the night followed by a bloodcurdling scream.

"What's that?" the four men chorused.

As the scream left my throat, I leaped just in time to avoid the axe as it whizzed by my head. I jumped back, tripped over an old chair and crashed to the floor. Rolling to the window, I scrambled to my feet and then dove through the window in front of me. I landed on my face in a thornbush but I hardly noticed it. I had only one thought in mind: get the hell away from there. Crawling out of the thornbush, I got to my feet once more and started running towards my car. I slowed down as I neared the car and then I saw the four men standing open-mouthed beside it.

"I don't know how you done it but you win," I gasped as I recognized Pete the barkeep and his old friend.

"What's going on in there?" asked one of the other men.

"Don't play innocent with me! Here's your hundred," I shouted handing the money to Pete.

The four of them were still standing there staring toward me with mouths agape as I roared the car away.

FIRE DRILL

by Alvin Gillies

Johnny Dunes woke quickly at the sound of the telephone.. Groping on the night table, he found the lamp, snapped it on and squinted in the bright glare. As he lifted the receiver to his ear, he glanced at the clock by the telephone's base: 4:10 a.m.

"Yeah?" he said.

The answering feminine voice was controlled but carried a note of urgency: "This is the switchboard. Please remain calm but act quickly. There is a fire in your wing of the hotel. All guests are advised to leave by their nearest fire exit. Put on your shoes, coat, or robe and leave without delay. I haven't any time for questions, sir. Just act fast!"

There was a click and the connection was broken. For one awful moment after he dropped the phone back into it's cradle, Johnny lay in a state of paralysis, propped on one elbow. In his way of life, risks were to be taken in stride, but this was different. His great fear had always been that one day he would be trapped high in a burning building, and now that the moment was upon him his mind refused to work.

This could not really be happening, he thought, but then a picture flashed in his mind of the corridor outside the door swirling with smoke and heat. And he was able to act. He started to the window even though he knew his only view would be that of a vacant lot filled with weeds and rubble ten stories down and nothing but summer's heat between him and the bottom. Halfway to the window, something clicked in his mind. Something doesn't quite figure, he thought, and he whirled to pick up the telephone again. It rang just as his hand reached the receiver.

Again the voice repeated the urgent message of a few moments before, "There is a fire in your wing. Act fast, sir —,"

"You told me, you told me," Johnny cut in.

The girl spoke again, "You mean the other operator called this floor?" She seemed close to hysteria. "O.K. Just get out fast, sir. It's getting worse and..."

That did it. Johnny dropped the telephone and went to the closet beside the bed and took out his trench coat.

On the window sill of a cold water flat on the opposite side of the vacant lot, a silenced rifle moved into line with Johnny's window as the light of his bedside lamp indented it among the others of the building. The man crowded behind the sights kept his eyes on the window of the lighted room while a woman close beside him shared a telephone with him. Suddenly a figure silhouetted against the venetian blinds, and the watchers tensed.

"You going to wait and see if he comes to the window?" the woman asked.

"Can't," the man answered. "He might not."

With a rapid fire but great precision, he fired three times. A small sound

of breaking glass followed the muffled shots, and the venetian blind shimmered for a second and then was still. There was no outcry as the shadowy form behind it dropped, and the man with the rifle drew back into the darkness and stood up. He let out a long breath. The woman pressed against him and together they stared at the lone lighted window of the building opposite.

"Are you sure you got him?" she asked.

"Yeah, I got him, kid," he said, "three times."

"You think anyone heard?"

"No," he answered. "Now make sure you got everything before we leave."

She looked carefully around the room as she spoke again. "You know what, Paul? I never thought anyone could put Johnny Dunes on the spot as easy as this."

"Like I said, kid, knowing Johnny's one big weakness, his fear of fire, and waiting for the right time would pay off. And that fleabag joint he stays in every time he comes to town would more'n likely scare him even more. I can't understand why a guy like him would stay there, not with his class."

He turned to her and grinned and added, "Not that it matters now, eh, kid?"

She smiled back and asked him, "How did you know he would come to the window, Paul?"

"I just figured anyone in a spot like that would. I know I would, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I guess so. Yes," she continued with more conviction, "I would."

"Your telephone act was great, kid. You really put it over the second time changing your voice the way you did."

"No, you're the smart one, Paul. You figured it all out. Now all your worries are over. They won't be putting the squeeze on you any more."

They left the room and walked down the stairs with arms around each other, their eyes bright with victorious accomplishment.

In the lighted hotel room across the lot, Johnny Dunes stared at the bullet holes in his trench coat, shoulder high.

"Could have got a finger," he muttered, examining the splintered wood of the coat hanger on which he had held the coat out in front of the window. Dropping the coat and hanger on a chair, he walked over to the night table, picked up the telephone receiver and waited expectantly. The ear piece clicked and a soft voice said, "Johnny?"

"Who else is in this room, baby?"

The girl giggled in a hushed tone; then, her voice brightening, asked him, "Say, who was the guy who phoned you a couple of times?"

"Guy?" he repeated. "Oh, just an old friend."

"I was tempted to listen in," she said, "but I kept in mind what you said you would do to me if I did."

"That's a good girl. Now, my reason for calling, baby, are you coming up for a nightcap?"

Again the girl's voice sank to a low pitch. "Oh, Johnny, you know I can't tonight. I told you before: the other girl is sick and I'm all alone on the switch-board."

HOW TO WRITE

by Mike Bailey

Having subscribed to sundry writers' magazines for the last ten years and read literally dozens of "How To Write" books, I decided the time had come to put pen to paper.

I thought I'd start by writing a short story and expand it into a million-dollar best seller. Then pocket books and finally another million for movie rights. My fortune was made.

I retired from the world and wrote a wonderful story about "The World's Most Honest Man." I based it on my father's life story. When it was finished, I handed it to our JOURNAL editor.

"It's not bad," he said, "but it lacks colour."

I remembered that my father was colour-blind, and so I wrote another wonderful story about "The World's Most Dishonest man" and based it on my own life story.

"That's a bit better," said our genial editor, "but it lacks movement."

This was true; so for the purpose of my story I became an international crook, dashing across the globe — seventeen countries in the first four pages. It moved.

"You've got the movement all right," agreed the editor, "but you lost the motive."

I guessed he was right; so I sat down and cut out some of the travel. I became a killer and murdered everyone in the book who knew who I was. That was a good motive, I thought.

"It's certainly an interesting idea," said the editor kindly, "but people nowadays look for a psychological approach."

Now I really had to think. I condensed all the action and travel to the first two chapters. The remaining 45,000 words I filled with the hero's nightmares. Boy, how he suffered!

"It's improving," the editor condescended; "but psychological suffering is not felt unless it is described in the first person singular."

He was right of course. It took me three days to rewrite the whole story. By then I was having nightmares myself. Boy, how *I* suffered!

"You know," said the editor, smiling, "what you need is a love interest — something with universal appeal."

Of course! Why hadn't I thought of that? I remembered a Mexican girl I had met in Hawaii and wrote her into the last seven chapters. But to forestall anyone recognizing her, I said she was French and came from the Black Forest.

"She's certainly the girl for the part," admitted our editor, "but she's not alive. Be convincing in your writing. Be sensual."

Now I had it! How could I ever repay this man? Not wasting any time, I started on page one. Our passion scorched its way through chapter after chapter. It seared the pages. So hot was our affair that I had to quit every night at nine to clear the smoke before count-up. As it was, the ashes clogged my sink. Finally, with a burst of pulsating passion, I finished it

"This is disgusting!" shouted the editor. "It's pornography of the worst kind. Anyway, 3,000 words is the limit."

"Well I *could* condense it," I suggested eagerly.

"It needs it," he agreed. "But it's too late," he said sorrowfully as he handed me the manuscript. "We went to press yesterday."

